Claims

1. (Currently Amended): A method for processing an image, comprising the steps of:

   comparing a first image intensity associated with a subject image portion with a second image intensity associated with an adjacent image portion;

   determining an image intensity difference between the first image intensity and the second image intensity;

   classifying the subject image portion as a candidate edge portion in response to a determination that the first image intensity is less than the second image intensity and a determination that the image intensity difference is greater than a predetermined threshold image intensity difference;

   determining whether the candidate edge portion is a true edge portion; and

   enhancing the true edge portion by associating the subject image portion with a third image intensity, wherein the third image intensity is less than the first image intensity, thereby sharpening the true edge.

2. (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of determining whether the candidate edge portion is a true edge portion, comprises the step of determining whether the candidate edge portion is adjacent to at least one second candidate edge portion.

3. (Original): The method of Claim 2, wherein the step of determining whether the candidate edge portion is a true edge portion, further comprises the step of determining whether the candidate edge portion is adjacent to the second candidate edge portion and to a third candidate edge portion.

4. (Previously Amended): The method of Claim 3, wherein the candidate edge portion, the second candidate edge portion and the third candidate edge portion form a line.

5. (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein the image is a digitized image.

6. (Original): The method of Claim 5, wherein the subject image portion is a pixel.

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7. (Original): The method of Claim 5, wherein the adjacent image portion is a pixel.

8. (Original): The method of Claim 5, wherein the image is a frame of a video stream.

9. (Original): The method of Claim 8, wherein the image intensity is measured in luminance.

10. (Original): The method of Claim 8, wherein the image intensity is measured in luminance and chrominance.

11. (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein the image is an image-type selected from the group consisting of:

    animation;

    computerized banners;

    real-time streaming video;

    stored video; and

    gaming graphics.

12. (Currently Amended): A system for enhancing a digitized image, comprising:

    a decoder operative to receive an encoded digitized image and to expand the encoded digitized image to generate a decoded digitized image;

    a post-processing unit operative to <u>generate a processed image by</u> filter<u>ing</u> the decoded digitized image ~~to process an image flaw~~; <u>and</u>

    an edge enhancer operative to detect an edge in the <u>processed</u> ~~decoded digitized~~ image to enhance the edge in the <u>processed</u> ~~decoded digitized~~ image.

13. (Original): The system of Claim 12, wherein the edge is a portion of the decoded digitized image separating a first image portion of substantially uniform image intensity from a second image portion of substantially uniform image intensity.

14. (Original): The system of Claim 12, wherein the edge is a line in the decoded digitized image.

15. (Original): The system of Claim 12, wherein the edge enhancer is further operative to detect the edge by comparing a subject portion of the decoded digitized image with a first adjacent portion of the decoded digitized image and with a second portion of the decoded digitized image and determining that the subject portion is associated with a lower image intensity level than a first image intensity associated with the first adjacent portion of the decoded digitized image and a second image intensity associated with the second adjacent portion of the decoded digitized image.

16. (Currently Amended): The system of Claim 12, wherein the post-processor removes ~~the~~ an image flaw from the decoded digitized image, in response to a determination that an image intensity of a pixel associated with the image flaw does not differ from at least one surrounding pixel by more than a threshold value.

17. (Original): The system of Claim 12, wherein the post-processor adjusts the image flaw in the decoded digitized image, by modifying an image intensity of a pixel associated with the image flaw to correspond to a median image intensity value of at least one surrounding pixel.

18. (Currently Amended): A method for detecting and enhancing an edge in a decoded digitized image, comprising the steps of:

> determining a first image intensity associated with a first pixel in the decoded digitized image;

> determining a second image intensity associated with a second pixel in the decoded digitized image;

> determining a third image intensity associated with a third pixel in the decoded digitized image;

> classifying the first pixel as a first candidate edge pixel in response to a determination that the first image intensity is less than the second image intensity and is less than the third image intensity;

> determining whether the first pixel is adjacent to a second candidate edge pixel;

determining whether the second pixel is adjacent to a third candidate edge pixel;

classifying the first pixel as a true edge pixel in response to a determination that the first pixel is adjacent to the second candidate edge pixel and the second candidate edge pixel is adjacent to the third candidate edge pixel; and

enhancing the true edge pixel by associating a fourth image intensity with the true edge pixel first pixel, the fourth image intensity being lower than the first image intensity, thereby sharpening the true edge pixel.

19. (Original): The method of Claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

associating a fifth image intensity with the second pixel, the fifth image intensity being higher than the second image intensity; and

associating a sixth image intensity with the third pixel, the sixth image intensity being higher than the third image intensity.

20. (Original): The method of Claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

determining a background color associated with the first pixel;

determining a quality level of the digitized image; and

selecting the fourth image intensity based on the background color and the quality level.

21. (New) A method for enhancing a digitized image, comprising the steps of:

receiving an encoded digitized image an encoded digitized image;

expanding the encoded digitized image to generate a decoded digitized image;

generating a processed image by filtering the decoded digitized image; and

detecting an edge in the processed image to enhance the edge in the processed image.

22. (New): The method of Claim 21, wherein the edge is a portion of the decoded digitized image separating a first image portion of substantially uniform image intensity from a second image portion of substantially uniform image intensity.

23. (New): The method of Claim 21, wherein the edge is a line in the decoded digitized image.

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24. (New): The method of Claim 21, wherein the step of detecting an edge further comprises comparing a subject portion of the decoded digitized image with a first adjacent portion of the decoded digitized image and with a second portion of the decoded digitized image and determining that the subject portion is associated with a lower image intensity level than a first image intensity associated with the first adjacent portion of the decoded digitized image and a second image intensity associated with the second adjacent portion of the decoded digitized image.

25. (New): The method of Claim 21, further comprising removing an image flaw from the decoded digitized image, in response to a determination that an image intensity of a pixel associated with the image flaw does not differ from at least one surrounding pixel by more than a threshold value.

26. (New): The method of Claim 21, further comprising adjusting an image flaw in the decoded digitized image, by modifying an image intensity of a pixel associated with the image flaw to correspond to a median image intensity value of at least one surrounding pixel.